

Basic facts

Here are five basic facts about the Arabic alphabet. Read them before you start the course and everything will make a lot more sense.

1) The Arabic alphabet contains 28 letters. In addition to the 28 letters, there are 3 special characters that are written above and below other letters.

2) Arabic contains 5 sounds that we do not use in English. You'll need to try extra hard to learn to pronounce these sounds.

3) Arabic is read from right to left and the letters in words also run from right to left. Here is an example using the English alphabet:

English order: This is my new car.

Arabic order: .rac wen ym si sihT

4) Each Arabic letter can take a different form depending whether it's at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the word.

This is not so different to English where some words take a capital letter at the beginning. In the English alphabet capital letters look completely different to lower case letters: A a / B b When you learnt to read the English alphabet, you learnt to recognise the capital letters as well as their lower case forms. In Arabic you also need to learn to recognise more than one form of a letter.

5) When saying the Arabic alphabet, each letter has a name. For example, the first four letters of the Arabic alphabet are alif, baa, taa, thaa. These names are different to the sound that the letter makes.

Again, this is the same as English. We pronounce the first four letters of the English alphabet ay, bee, see, dee but in words the letters have different sounds. Think about how 'c' sounds in 'cat' - it sounds different to when we talk about the letter C ("see").

ba

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'b' in the English word 'boy'

How does this letter look in words?

As you read on the page of basic facts, each Arabic letter takes a different form when it appears at different places in a word. Here

is how this letter looks when written at the beginning, middle or end of a word:



Each of these forms look slightly different but they're the same letter and they're pronounced the same way.

Now let's practise recognising this letter when it's disguised in a word, surrounded by other letters. Here are three words that contain a letter 'ba'. Can you spot it?

1. ظَبِي

2. نَابَ

3. بَانَ

Did you find the letter 'ba'? Here are the same words with the letter 'ba' highlighted in blue.

1. ظبي

2. ناب

3. بان

In Arabic there are three characters that function differently to the other letters of the alphabet. These characters are called fatha, kasrah and dammah. They represent the sounds 'a', 'i' and 'u'.

What's different about these characters?

They're always written the same, no matter where they are in a word.

They're not written in line with other letters. They're go above or below the previous letter.

fatha

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'a' in the English word 'cat'

How does it look in words?



The character is written above the letter before it. Look at the example. The character is written above a letter 'b', to give the sound 'ba'.

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 \text{ب} & + & \text{ـ} & = & \text{بـ} \\
 \text{b} & + & \text{a} & = & \text{ba}
 \end{array}$$

kasrah

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'i' in the English word 'hit'

How does it look in words?



The character is written below the letter before it. In this example it's written below a letter 'b', to give the sound 'bi'.

ب

dammah

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'u' in the English word
'but'

How does it look in words?

و

The character is written above the letter
before it. In this example it's written above
a letter 'b', to give the sound 'bu'.

بُو

alif

You know this sound from..

The sound made by "a" in the English word 'start'

This is how the letter looks in words



waw

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'oo' in the English word 'cool'

This is how the letter looks in words

End

و

Middle

و

Beginning

و

ya

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'ee' in the English word
'fee'

This is how the letter looks in words

End

ي

Middle

ي

Beginning

ي

ta

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 't' in the English word
'**t**en'

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



tha

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'th' in the English word
'**th**ree'

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



miim

You know this sound from..

The sounds made by 'm' in the English word
'**m**ake'

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



nuun

You know this sound from..

The sounds made by 'n' in the English word
'**n**ow'

This is how the letter looks in words

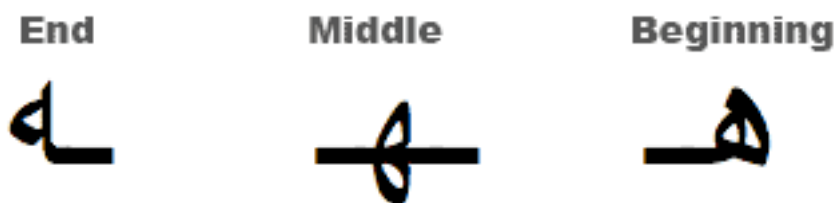


ha

You know this sound from..

The sounds made by 'h' in the English word
'**h**ot'

This is how the letter looks in words



jiim

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'j' in the English word
'just'

The sound made by 's' in the English word
'leisure' or the 'j' in the French word 'je'

Arabic speakers pronounce this letter in two different ways, depending on their country. You can use whichever pronunciation you like.

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



hha

You know this sound from..

This is a new sound for English speakers. It's similar to a 'h' sound but your breath needs to come out stronger. Imagine you are blowing on a window to steam it up - this is the sound you would make.

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



kha

You know this sound from..

This is a new sound for English speakers. Unless you know Spanish, you might not be familiar with it.

It's the sound made by 'j' in the Spanish word 'trabajo'

Think of it as a soft 'k' sound.

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



daal

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'd' in the English word 'dog'

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



thaal

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'th' in the English word 'then'

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



ra

This is a new sound for English speakers.
If you know Spanish, this is the sound made
by a letter 'r' in Spanish.
This is different to the sound of an English
'r', it is pronounced with the tongue further
forward, just behind the teeth.

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



zay

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'z' in the English word
'zoo'

This is how the letter looks in words

siin

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 's' in the English word
'six'

This is how the letter looks in words

End

ش

Middle

ش

Beginning

ش

shiin

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'sh' in the English word
'shop'

This is how the letter looks in words

End

ش

Middle

ش

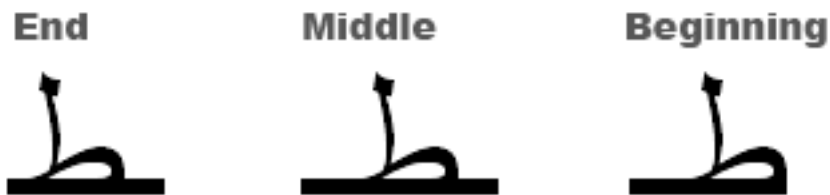
Beginning

ش

taa

This is a new sound for English speakers. Start by putting your tongue and teeth in position to say 't'. When making the sound add extra emphasis from the back of the throat. You could think of it as a throaty 't' sound.

This is how the letter looks in words



thaa

This is a new sound for English speakers. Start by putting your tongue and teeth in position to say 'th' as in the word 'then'. When making the sound add extra

emphasis from the back of the throat. You could think of it as a throaty 'th' sound.

This is how the letter looks in words



saad

This is a new sound for English speakers. Start by putting your tongue and teeth in position to say 's'. When making the sound add extra emphasis from the back of the throat. You could think of it as a throaty 's' sound.

This is how the letter looks in words

End

Middle

Beginning

ص ص ص

daad

This is a new sound for English speakers. Start by putting your tongue and teeth in position to say 'd'. When making the sound add extra emphasis from the back of the throat. You could think of it as a throaty 'd' sound.

This is how the letter looks in words

End

Middle

Beginning

ض ض ض

ayn

This is a new sound for English speakers. Say a letter 'a' as in 'cat'. Think about the place in your mouth where the 'a' sound is produced, now produce the same sound from further back in your throat.

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



ghayn

This is a new sound for English speakers but if you know French you'll be familiar with it. This is the same as a French 'r'. Press the back of your tongue gently against the top

of your mouth at the back, where it curves down to your throat.

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



fa

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'f' in the English word 'fun'

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



qaf

This is a new sound for English speakers. Think about how you make the sound for a letter 'k' - you make it by pressing the middle of your tongue to the roof of your mouth then releasing it suddenly to give a short explosion of air. To make the sound of 'qaf', make a similar explosion of air by releasing the back of your tongue at the back of your mouth, where it curves down into your throat.

This is how the letter looks in words



kaf

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'k' in the English word 'keep'

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



lam

You know this sound from..

The sound made by 'l' in the English word 'last'

This is how the letter looks in words

End



Middle



Beginning



Writing In Arabic

In this lesson we will have some examples of how the letters are joined together to form a word:

Example 1

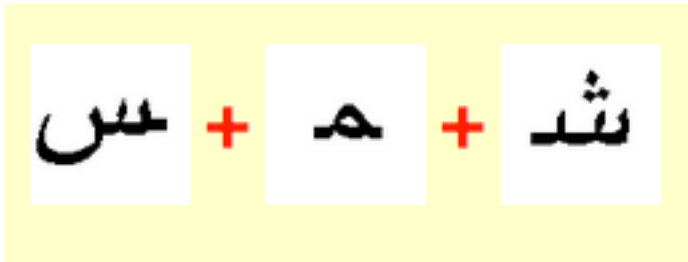
Let's start with a simple word:

The word "Shams" (Which means "Sun") consists of the following letters:

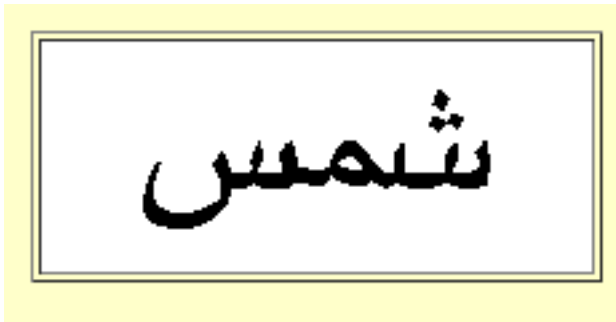
The letter "Sheen", then "Meem" and finally "Seen".

- We start with a "Sheen" in its initial form..
- Then the "Meem" in the medial form..
- Finally the "Seen" in the final form..

Remember to start from right to left.



After joining the letters together we have the word "Shams":



Note: Please read “Writing In Arabic” lesson for more clarity, you can find it in theory class.